

INTRODUCTION OF H.R. 297, VETERAN VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AND EMPLOYMENT SUBSISTENCE ALLOWANCE IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2009

**HON. STEVE BUYER**

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, January 8, 2009*

Mr. BUYER. Madam Speaker, today I am introducing the Veteran Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Subsistence Allowance Improvement Act of 2009. The Department of Veteran Affairs' Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment program should be the crown jewel in VA's benefit system for service-disabled veterans.

Most of the nearly 100,000 veterans participating in this program are enrolled in long-term education programs, typically those that lead to a college degree. Unfortunately, thousands of participants drop out of the Vocational Rehabilitation program because they need to work to support their families. This legislation would significantly increase the ability of veterans to support their families while undergoing rehabilitation.

Today's VR&E program, in addition to paying for the costs related to any education or training program, also provides a small subsistence per month allowance. For FY09, the basic allowance for full-time participation is about \$541 per month with small additional sums for dependents. Considering this modest amount, it is not surprising that thousands of veterans drop out of their rehabilitation program. This bill would increase the basic subsistence allowance to \$1,200 per month. The bill would also simplify VA's administrative burden by standardizing payments for all types of services under the program.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to co-sponsor and support the measure.

KIDNEY DISEASE EDUCATION BENEFITS ACT OF 2009

**HON. MARK STEVEN KIRK**

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, January 8, 2009*

Mr. KIRK. Madam Speaker, today, I am introducing the Kidney Disease Education Benefits Act. As co-Chairman of the Congressional Kidney Caucus, I am proud to join with my fellow Kidney Caucus co-Chairman, Congressman JIM McDERMOTT (D-WA) to introduce this important initiative.

Each year, some 80,000 people are diagnosed with End-Stage Renal Disease. This stage of kidney disease occurs when the kidneys function at less than 10 percent and, as a result, are no longer able to maintain life. Patients with kidney disease require regular kidney dialysis treatments or a transplant to survive. Medicare pays for most renal patients at the cost of \$20 billion a year, nearly 7 percent of all Medicare expenditures, despite the fact that the kidney disease population represents just 1.1 percent of all Medicare patients.

Complications associated with kidney disease are common, but can be reduced if appropriate education is provided prior to the

onset of renal failure. There are a number of steps chronic kidney disease patients can take to reduce renal failure and better prepare themselves for dialysis, including making lifestyle changes, learning about renal replacement options, and seeking a compatible kidney donor. Medicare, however, does not provide coverage for education on nutrition, treatment options, venous access, or transplant coordination until after the patient has experienced kidney failure and is already undergoing dialysis.

To remedy this situation, we are introducing the Kidney Disease Education Benefits Act of 2009 to make counseling available to patients before they begin dialysis. This is a top National Kidney Foundation legislative priority. Our bill would provide reimbursement for an estimated \$10 million per year for up to six educational sessions for Medicare patients. These sessions would be offered one year prior to kidney failure to help prevent renal failure, better prepare these patients for dialysis, and save Medicare costs that can be associated with complications resulting from renal failure.

Kidney disease cannot be reversed, but, with appropriate education, its effects can be slowed, improving the quality of life for renal patients and reducing costs to taxpayers. I would like to thank Congressman McDERMOTT for joining me in the fight against kidney disease. I look forward to working with him and my other colleagues on this important initiative.

HONORING FREDERIC VON RUEDEN

**HON. GEORGE RADANOVICH**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, January 8, 2009*

Mr. RADANOVICH. Madam Speaker, I rise today along with my colleague from California Mr. COSTA to commend and congratulate Frederic Von Rueden, U.S. Navy Retired, upon being honored with the Citizen Soldier Award. Mr. Von Rueden was honored on November 7, 2008 at the Fresno City College Veterans Day 2008 Memorial and Dedication Ceremony.

Mr. Von Rueden was born in Farihault, Minnesota, on October 25, 1917. In 1936 he enlisted in the Navy, went through "Boot Camp" at Great Lakes, Illinois, and underwent further training in San Francisco, California. From San Francisco he went to San Diego to board the Light Cruiser USS *Richmond* where he spent the next 9 years. The home port for the ship was Panama. He was in Valparaiso the day Pearl Harbor was hit. The ship escorted many convoys to the South Pacific and conducted regular bombardment off the coast of Japan in company with the USS *Salt Lake City*, where they often engaged the Japanese Fleet in battle. Mr. Von Rueden was a boiler technician. Most of his days were spent below deck in the engine rooms. At the end of World War II the USS *Richmond* was returned to Philadelphia and was decommissioned.

In Philadelphia, Mr. Von Rueden went through some schooling and was reassigned to the Battleship USS *Iowa* out of Long Beach, California for about 6 months. After that he spent some time aboard the USS *Topeka* and

the USS *Los Angeles* for tours. He decided to spend some time on land training at Port Huemene, California. With this new training he was sent to Kwadjelen in the South Pacific for 18 months to do utility maintenance. After completing another tour aboard the USS *Theodore E. Chandler* he trained to be a Recruiter and was sent to the Fresno Recruit Center. He completed one more 18 month tour aboard the USS *Iowa* before returning to Fresno. In 1955, Mr. Von Rueden became a permanent resident in Fresno and retired to the Fleet Reserve on February 5, 1957.

After retiring from the Navy, Mr. Von Rueden was hired by the County of Fresno to work at Juvenile Hall. He attended school, part time, at Fresno City College on the GI Bill, and graduated with a degree in 1961. In 1968 he transferred to the County Public Works Department and was a maintenance engineer at Fresno County Hospital until he retired on March 1, 1980. Mr. Von Rueden and his wife reside at a retirement home in Clovis, California. He is still active in the Fresno Branch 249 of the Fleet Reserve Association.

Madam Speaker, I rise today to commend and congratulate Frederic Von Rueden upon his achievements. I invite my colleagues to join me in wishing Mr. Von Rueden many years of continued success.

HONORING PFC GARFIELD M. LANGHORN, MOH

**HON. TIMOTHY H. BISHOP**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, January 8, 2009*

Mr. BISHOP of New York. Madam Speaker, our brave men and women in uniform are all heroes. But the exceptional few who make the supreme sacrifice to protect the lives of their brothers-in-arms become more than heroes; they become legends. Today, I rise to honor U.S. Army Private First Class Garfield M. Langhorn, a resident of Riverhead in Eastern Long Island who received the Medal of Honor for his heroic actions in Pleiku Province, Vietnam, 40 years ago this month.

As they attempted to rescue the crew of a downed helicopter, PFC Langhorn's unit was trapped under intense enemy fire. As night fell and U.S. air support was called off, enemy fighters began to probe their perimeter. The citation for PFC Langhorn's Medal of Honor reads:

"An enemy hand grenade landed in front of PFC Langhorn and a few feet from personnel who had become casualties. Choosing to protect these wounded, he unhesitatingly threw himself on the grenade, scooped it beneath his body and absorbed the blast. By sacrificing himself, he saved the lives of his comrades. PFC Langhorn's extraordinary heroism at the cost of his life was in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit on himself, his unit, and the U.S. Army."

Madam Speaker, PFC Langhorn's sacrifice half a world away remains a credit to the Riverhead community, which is proud to celebrate his achievements on the 40th anniversary of his death. May his example continue to inspire all those who aspire to service "beyond the call of duty."